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the neighbouring Carriers, but Chilkotin as well sometimes descended to the valley. On the coast, though the dense underbrush prevented travel along the shore, the long fiords, sheltered from the open Pacific, were ideal for the use of canoes.[16] Comparatively lengthy journeys were neither difficult nor uncommon. The *Tăl'is* people were usually on amicable terms with the inhabitants of Rivers Inlet, and the Kimsquit with the Kitlobe. The Bella Coola were accustomed to attend potlatches at Alert Bay and Fort Rupert,[17] Knight's Inlet, and Bute Inlet, receiving their hosts, in turn, at Bella Coola. On the other hand, there was little friendly intercourse with the northern tribes, of which the Kitkatla especially were dreaded by the residents of the central coast. Until recent years the Bella Coola had no direct knowledge of other Salish-speaking peoples, although some of the Chilkotin told them of a tribe living far to the south, in the interior, whom they encountered in some of their wanderings and used to term *Nuxálkmx*, recognizing the similarity between their language and that of the Bella Coola. A few years ago several Bella Coola attended a boarding-school and were amazed to find that many of their words were understood by fellow-students from Chilliwack.

To sum up: The Bella Coola were in close contact with the neighbouring coastal tribes, with the members of which they felt themselves to have cultural affinities. They recognize that they have received many ceremonial rites from their neighbours, and must have adopted other elements of culture which they now consider indigenous. It is probable that certain Bella Coola customs must likewise have been transmitted to other tribes, but such lie without the scope of this monograph. The outlying villages were in close contact with foreign neighbours, and tended to assimilate elements of their culture, but, on the whole, the Bella Coola present a tribal unity with distinctive local customs, falling within the general pattern of coastal culture.

[16] For types of canoes, see Appendix A.
[17] The principal Kwakiutl villages.

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423 is no doubt that a man tends to lose those rights in property
614 which are strictly his, if they are located at a distance. Thus several men claim that they are legally entitled to hunt at Kitlobe, but from mere difficulty of access neither they nor their fathers have exercised the right, and it would have been lost in the course of a few generations, even without the utter decay of custom which has followed the advent of the white man. Practically, a man hunts only in the grounds of those ancestral families in whose origin myths he has names, though, theoretically, he is entitled to hunt on any hunting-ground of any ancestral family of which he is a member whether or not he holds a duly validated name from its origin myth. It is not necessary to confirm the right to property as with a name, though a validated ancestral name is the usual mark of a man's right to that area of the ancestral family to which that designation belongs. Although the ownership of land in distant regions is of little practical importance, it is, none the less, a
[554] matter of great pride to a man to feel that he has rights in many places. The efforts of an individual to make good those
[721] claims has often led to bloodshed; in fact, one intelligent old man stated that property disputes were the principal cause for
[554] war in British Columbia. A person who lacks hunting-grounds is little better than a slave, whereas one who has much land is important.

The Bella Coola regard land as almost inalienable. Though a man does not own the land of his wife's ancestral family, he can use it and his children have full rights to it. Conversely, a wife can gather berries on her husband's land, though it is
[574] not hers. A guest at a village may be allowed to use the territory of his hosts, but it does not become his. In the old
727 days wars between the coastal tribes were common, but though
423 slaves were taken freely, land was never seized; such is unthinkable to a Bella Coola. In fact, several of the older people
[567] inquired how it had been possible, in the first world war, for the allies, whose cause they believed to be righteous, to annex territory from Germany. If the victors had killed or enslaved

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lieved that all the Kitkatla chiefs were powerful, but *Tcabsia* was the greatest of all. It is said that one of his prerogatives[1] was to exercise *jus primae noctis* whenever a Kitkatla was married. Without question, tales of this chief's prowess have become exaggerated in transmission, none the less they show that the Bella Coola realize the great importance of the northern chiefs. Concerning their nearer neighbours, the Bella Bella, the Bella Coola understand the way in which the members of a family combine to help their chief in the giving of presents. They say that the Bella Bella consider the Bella Coola practice of each one endeavouring to make himself a chief to be foolish in the extreme. Such is also said to be the opinion among the Kwakiutl, who support their contention that in Bella Coola all are chiefs, from the fact that flooring exists under the seats of all, whereas in Fort Rupert, their home, such occurs only beneath the seats of chiefs.

Corresponding to the extreme paucity of functions possessed by Bella Coola chiefs, their prerogatives are likewise scanty. Indeed, they take their validated seats only during certain rites of the secret society connected with chiefs, at potlatches, and at ceremonial meals. These last occur whenever a deer or seal is killed; the latter is considered a great delicacy.[2] Anyone can kill a seal, but it would be unthinkable for a Bella Coola to share its flesh with his immediate family only. The animal is cleaned, the hole made by bullet or spear carefully plugged, and the carcass boiled whole in a large box. Meanwhile a herald (I, p. 244) summons the chiefs to the house where the successful hunter lives. If the meal is to consist merely of one small seal, only a few chiefs are invited, those of greatest influence through their possession of "strong" seats. When several seals have been killed, the number invited is correspondingly larger, but no woman may partake unless she ranks

[1] This is said to have been a personal prerogative, not shared by all chiefs, and requiring validation by valuable presents.

[2] Only traces of the rite described in this paragraph occur at the present time. In fact, the reservation of seal meat for chiefs alone was discontinued towards the close of the last century.

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as a man by the duly validated ownership of a chief's name in her own right. Formerly a slave was never allowed to eat seal, unless he had been the slayer. If many seals are killed, chiefs from adjacent villages are sometimes invited. The chiefs seat themselves according to their proper positions and are first served with the blood-stained grease that floats to the top of the water as the meat is boiling. When cooked, the meat is cut into strips, measured in terms of so many finger breadths, according to the number of guests. The cuts run down each fore-flipper, so that each receives a narrow strip including one of the toes. The head is always given to the herald.[3]

Wealthy chiefs frequently invite their fellows to ordinary meals even when no seal or deer has been killed. On these occasions, as at seal feasts, the guests are designated by their ancestral names, not by those in general use.

Chiefs are also accustomed to meet for the discussion of matters connected with the winter ceremonial; on such occasions their number may be augmented by men of influence in the secret society, though they do not rank as chiefs. Such a meeting is always called when a new member is to be initiated into the *kusiut* society. If there is difference of opinion the influence of even a *numitl* chief is outweighed by a man of importance in the society. The matter is discussed by all present and a decision reached by general agreement. It is difficult for a white man to understand how such is possible without either a vote, or general recognition by all that the views of some individual must be accepted. The writer was present at one such meeting, and was struck by the manner in which, after considerable, and at times heated, discussion, a consensus of opinion was reached, and accepted even by those who had proposed a contrary course.

Near every village is a place where the chiefs hold such meetings. All the inhabitants know the general locality, but

[3]Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this account, but errors may have crept in on account of the length of time which has elapsed since the ceremony was carried out in full detail.

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monograph the term "potlatch" will be limited to this, the *ẖm*.

Every Bella Coola is, or should be, able to recount how, in the beginning of time, the supreme god, *Ălquntăm*, caused his ancestors to be created in his house in the land above, whence they were sent down to populate the earth. A creation legend of this type is a man's most treasured possession.[4] Most myths describe the adventures of these first people, how they prospered in the Bella Coola country until they were able to invite to their homes guests from far and near, to whom they showed what they had achieved, through the assistance of *Ălquntăm*, or of some other supernatural being. In so doing they were carrying out *Ălquntăm*'s wishes. He told some of these first people that if they accumulated much wealth, in those days chiefly food, there was danger that the provisions first stored would rot, hence they should cut away the bottom of the pile and present it to other men and women. The Bella Coola term for "to cut out that which is rotten" is *ẖlt*, hence the origin, according to their belief, of the word *ẖm*, which thus has the significance of "a giving away of long accumulated goods which otherwise might rot."

By the splendour of his gifts each of the first people able to give a potlatch (*ẖm*), spread the knowledge of his name and fame to the towns whence his guests had assembled. Further, those who had received dances from *Ălquntăm* were able to demonstrate them. In course of time those who had first given potlatches died, but on taking their fathers' names, the sons, or other descendants, endeavoured to uphold the parental tradition by inviting guests from afar and giving them valuable presents. At such a ceremony the family history, or family myth, was recounted, so that the donor of a potlatch not only increased his own prestige, he incorporated therewith the traditions of his parent. This is the essence of the potlatch as carried out today.[5]

[4] Examples of these are given in vol. I, chap. VI.

[5] It has been found convenient to use the present tense throughout, although the potlatch is not now carried out in its entirety.

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Although guests from different tribes are sometimes invited to other ceremonials, it is at potlatches that they are essential. Since the validity of such transactions as marriages, divorces, or the assumption of professional prerogatives depends on the presence of witnesses, and since the importance of such a rite depends on the number of witnesses, a man is always eager to carry out any public performance at a potlatch when he is sure of the attention of foreigners, and the consequent wider diffusion of knowledge of what he has done. The man who has invited guests is usually willing to allow others to perform at his potlatch, since it increases the complexity and importance of the affair. It follows that no two potlatches are alike; one will contain features entirely lacking in another. Moreover, the wealth of the donor determines how many rites he himself will cause to be performed. The fundamental concept of the potlatch is the inviting of guests from abroad to witness rites in connection with an ancestral myth, especially the return of a recently deceased relative of the donor to visit the living.

At any important potlatch the following rites are carried out, and in the account of the ritual it will be assumed that these alone are taking place. If the reader bears this summary in mind, he is less likely to be confused by the complication of rites.

(1) The return of a dead ancestor to visit the living.

(2) The initiation of young men or women into the *sisaok* society. This includes the validation of a *sisaok* name for each, and a period of seclusion in the back-room. The initiates may either be relatives of the donor of the potlatch, or young persons whose relatives are taking the opportunity to carry out the rite in the presence of foreigners. Some of the initiates may already be members of the society, undergoing a further period of seclusion in order to increase their status by a further distribution of presents.

(3) The payment by the wife of the donor and her family of goods to "rebuy" her from her husband. This is a legal fiction, though necessary to maintain the status of the children.

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535 The reception of this power from his Bella Coola confrère
* 556 enables the guest *siki* to dance at X's potlatch, if he so desires.
575 In that case the guests are guided to X's house without further delay. If, however, he does not wish to dance, he goes through the motions of throwing something back to the Bella Coola *siki*, who pretends to catch it. He bends down, twists himself about, then throws back his cape—to display there the representation of *Mɫakila*. At the time of throwing, the visiting *siki* had slipped his mask out of sight, so that those witnessing the transaction, ignorant of the fact that the recipient has had an identical mask hidden beneath his cape throughout, are suitably impressed. He now revolves four times, while an assistant, sheltered under a large cloak, sounds the whistle constantly. Then the *siki* makes the motion of throwing something to X's house, and after that the whistle sounds from within, while the man who had been blowing one beside the *siki* ceases. Thus the uninitiated are led to believe that the voice can proceed only from the place where the power over which the *siki* has control is situated.

* 556 The guests are conducted to X's house, to which a number
● 574 of young men carry their goods. A meal of toasted salmon, provided by X, is served to them by a number of youths, all of whom are eager to undertake this task throughout the ceremony. A section of the house is allotted to each party of guests, and within that space they arrange themselves according to convenience. Some informants state that the first group to arrive is seated nearest the fire. The whole of those invited are not placed according to rank. The amount of space allotted to each party of guests depends upon their number, and there is no particular choice made of a section in the house. X, or more often some one who speaks for him, welcomes the guests, and a spokesman from among them makes a suitable reply, usually with the assistance of an interpreter. After the meal, the guests can remain where they are or go out. As many as wish to do so stay in X's house, but many prefer to

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go to the homes of their friends in the village; it is a matter of convenience, not of ritual.

In the evening, there may be no rite of any kind, but X often invites everyone to his house for the performance of non-ceremonial dances. The singers strike up one of his *sisaok* or *a'alk* (I, p. 273) tunes and he dances to it. Then a tune belonging to one of his relatives is beaten out, and he too dances. After several have thus performed, a meal is served and all disperse. No supernatural beings are in attendance, hence there is no solemnity to the occasion; the evening's rites merely serve to show the guests the dances owned by their host and his family.

As each party of guests arrives the same procedure is repeated. X provides food for those who have assembled from day to day, so he anxiously awaits the last-comers. When at last they come the guests from all other towns are in their allotted sections of X's house, and are free to make gibes at the tardiness of those latest in appearing. Occasionally, hard feelings are engendered in this way, although it is an established custom to mock at the last to arrive. They seat themselves and a small amount of food is given them.

RITUAL CARRIED OUT BY THE GUESTS

Two youths, chosen by X for the purpose, sprinkle eagle down over the heads of all those present, as far as possible blowing it first over the chiefs. It serves as a token of goodwill, and marks also the ceremonial nature of the occasion. Then a leading *sisaok*, perhaps a *siki*, stands up and says in effect:

"Thank you for coming. You are welcome. We thank you for coming to witness what X has done. He is delighted to have you here, because he has lost many of his relatives and wishes to perpetuate their memory. They would be grieved if he did not do so."

An elaborate meal is now served by a number of young men.

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* 556 575 [535] the best songs they have made for the initiates, and any of the *sisaok* members of the audience desiring to "help" the initiates dance to them, even X himself on occasion. By "help" no material aid is indicated; such dancing merely displays a friendly and sympathetic interest. The initiates, resplendent in *sisaok* head-dresses, appear at the door of the back-room, and sometimes dance a few steps. Occasionally, at the conclusion of his song, a lad's parents, or other relatives, bring forward the goods which will be later distributed by X to the guests. On other occasions, this is reserved for the following day. Food is distributed and all disperse.

THE POTLATCH: SECOND DAY

On this, one of the two most important days of the whole ceremony, the following rites take place.

During the Day

[553] (1) Communication to the foreign guests of the new *sisaok* names of the initiates concealed within the back-room; these names are the ones that have been made known to the Bella Coola before the potlatch proper.

(2) Payment to X by the members of his wife's family of the goods necessary to rebuy her from her husband.

During the Evening

(3) Repayment by X of debts owed to members of his own village.

(4) Return of a dead relative of X to visit the living.

(5) Distribution of presents to validate this appearance.

(6) In some cases, dancing by some of the *sisaok* initiates.

[575 574] Early in the morning X gives each of his guests a wash-basin with the other necessary appurtenances for cleaning up, and towards noon all of those invited reassemble in his house. Three river canoes have been brought in and are ranged, two parallel to the side walls, and one parallel to the back wall, all far enough out to permit people to sit behind them. Boxes containing large quantities of red elderberries and olachen

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CHAPTER V

FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE POTLATCH

Heralds—Totem-Poles—Coppers—Professional Prerogatives—A'alk Dances—Miscellaneous Ceremonies

128 *556 THE ritual of the potlatch is so complicated that, in order to present a coherent account of it, it has been necessary to omit entirely some features that occur at many potlatches, and to refer briefly to others. This chapter is devoted to an elaboration of these points, thus avoiding the use of lengthy foot-notes in the preceding chapter.

HERALDS

203 *556 The principal functions of heralds[1] have already been described. They go from house to house inviting the people to assemble for the different ceremonies connected with the potlatch, but that is only one of their many duties. They likewise bear invitations to all types of ceremonies, such as marriages, mourning rites, or *kusiut* dances; in fact, they act as town criers. A person holding any public rite requests one or more heralds to deliver the invitation which is repeated in every house of the village in order from bottom to top.[2]

There are variations, of course, according to the rites to be performed. At a potlatch, the first duty of a herald is to seat [574 628 578] the guests in their proper places. This requires not only a good memory, but also considerable tact, since errors with foreign guests cause friction and embarrassment, and diminish the prestige of the whole ceremony. During the actual progress of the rites, a herald must constantly add dignity to the occa-

[1]Herald, *a'lk*ᵂ, plural, *waa'lk*ᵂ*a'a*, not to be confused with *a'alk*, the name of a society (I, p. 273).

[2]This order may once have had a ceremonial significance but it has been considered for a long time merely a matter of convenience. When giving presents also, a man follows the same order in his mind and names first the occupants of the bottom house, thus minimizing the danger of overlooking a guest.

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556 or three rounds he retires utterly exhausted. The time beaten
575 out for a *nusqwal* or *am'lel·a* dancer is the same. He too comes
535 near the fire and at first dances in the same manner until the
[533] singers in unison bellow out, *Wai··*, "More." With a run that ends in a crashing leap that seems to shake the floor, the performer takes his position between the fire and one of the side walls and begins to revolve furiously upon himself. His body is bent forward until it seems as if all that prevents him from falling to the floor is his hands clutched together as far as possible behind his back; while his feet move so rapidly that the short mincing steps run into each other. Gradually the beating becomes less violent, only to be followed by another cry of *Wai··*, and another rush and jump that lands the dancer behind the fire. Here he revolves once more in the same furious fashion; the same is repeated on the side of the fire opposite to the place where he first performed, and finally between the fire and the door. *Nusqwal* and *am'lel·a* are the most strenuous of all Bella Coola dances and the performer is glad to retire. He afterwards joins the audience. This dance entails no taboo or restrictions on the dancer.

This terminates the performance of this type of dance at a potlatch, but among the goods distributed are some to validate the name acquired by the dancer, and others to legalize his actual display.

574 The occasion on which importance and solemnity are
575 attached to *a'alk* dances is during potlatches, but they are
535 also given at other times. Most Bella Coola performances are so steeped in the presence of the supernatural that the element of enjoyment is secondary, but in the spring, after the
[796] end of the *kusiut* season and before the salmon come to the rivers, dances for pleasure are of common occurrence. A *sisaok* can call his fellows to his house and the singers beat out *sisaok* songs to which the owners dance, but the most common hosts are *a'alk*. Of course an individual may be a member of both societies, but the heralds invite the guests in his *a'alk* name. Those summoned include both members of the society

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and those who are not. Any *a'alk*, provided that he has enough food for a meal, can call in his neighbours, but the one who usually does so is a man who has received his name a year or two before the occasion.

A few days before the time selected, the host asks the singers to compose a new song for him. For a *nusqwal* dancer particularly, and in some cases for any one of the other three divisions of the society, the text does not deal with incidents connected with the host's ancestral story, but with humorous or disgraceful incidents of the present time. If a man has caught ten salmon and kept them all for himself, his miserliness is commented upon in the song; if a wife has deserted her husband for another man, the actions of the two are mercilessly ridiculed; if a chief has failed to display generosity it is likewise recorded, and reference is made to errors in dance ritual. To do this is one of the functions of a *nusqwal*, and the singers are always ready to assist him. At the same time they often add a new incident to the tune belonging to some other *a'alk* dancer so that he too will be able to perform. In this way the airs are remembered from year to year, which is different from the customary Bella Coola usage.

On the morning of the day chosen, the host asks one of the singers to beat a drum repeatedly but slowly, as a signal that a non-ceremonial dance is about to take place. About noon, heralds go from house to house announcing who is to give the dance. In the late afternoon the people gather in the donor's house where men, women, and children seat themselves without distinction of rank, the only reserved place being that for the singers behind the fire. They beat out the host's tune and he dances to it, while the singers themselves sing the words to the amusement of the audience. Using their own discretion, they then beat out the tune of another *a'alk* and he also dances, followed in succession by a third, a fourth, and as many as the singers think fit. Sometimes the songs of *susaok* are used in a similar manner. When many have danced, the host distributes food to all his guests, not forgetting to give the largest

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575
574 presents to the singers and heralds who have rendered assist-
535 ance. Instead of dispersing immediately, the guests may remain to gamble or wrestle. Since there is no solemnity attached to
[533] the affair, it is a time for indulgence in amusements of all kinds.
[525] These conclude the chief features of the *a'alk* dances. Prob-
[526] ably they once played an important part in the lives of the
[178] Bella Coola, but with the increase in importance of the *ɬɬaok*, they have decayed into little more than a form of entertainment.

A'alk ORIGIN MYTHS

551 Theoretically, every Bella Coola *a'alk* should be able to
575 record the myth in which his name is embodied, but few can
773 do so. Of course if a man has been able to validate both ancestral and *a'alk* names from the same myth, that is his authorization for both. In many cases a myth is split, and the portion containing an *a'alk* appellation is given to some member of the ancestral family, other than the chief able to validate the most important ancestral name. In such a case, the *a'alk* can record little more than that his designation came down with a specified group of the first people. This, for example, is the explanation given by a Kimsquit *nusqwal* for his name *Sinxälotla* which came to earth with *Smaoan* (I, p. 332) in the beginning of time. Another Kimsquit *a'alk*, *Ťlaiyäkam*, whose prerogative is to perform the dance of that name, states that it was brought down by *Sinuxɛtl* (I, p. 326), who assumed the designation of *Ťlaiyäkam* after its performance. This early settler had the additional name of *Wi'tälao*.

539 The two following origin myths were obtained in some detail:

Once,[1] long, long ago, *Älqunɛm* came to the conclusion that it was not good for the inhabitants of the world to be afraid of supernatural beings. He decided that the best way to dispel this dread would be to arrange a marriage between his daughter, *Sɯxan·a*, and a mortal; so he

[115] [1]Related by Mrs. Willie Mack. European elements have obviously been
[177] incorporated into the first part of this legend, though the narrator considered the whole tale to be ancient.

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556 performance of rites of this kind. But sociological and ethical
[182] concepts, shown at their highest development in the potlatch, are not limited to a few weeks of the year, or to any class of the community. Generosity on a large scale can be publicly
[577] displayed by chiefs alone, but to a lesser degree this virtue must be practised by everyone, since avarice is considered a major sin. Anyone who happens to pass a house in which a
576 meal is taking place must be invited to share it; to do other-
574 wise would be considered rude. The person summoned must take at least a trifle to show that he is not churlish and too proud to eat with his host, while if he is hungry, he shares whatever is being served as a matter of course. The head of
[177] the family should be the first to taste any wine[14] as proof that
[273] it is not poisoned, but otherwise he fares little, if any, better
[342] than his guests. This custom is now rapidly falling into disuse
[414] through the construction of individual family houses with doors and locks. The fisherman who has exclusive rights to a suit-
476 able place for netting olachen or salmon must give some of his
[226] catch to anyone who asks him. If he has landed four salmon, the first solicitor is given one, later comers, none at all. When a net is set in the river, anyone passing is allowed to raise it and take some of the contents; if there are two fish, he may
[685] remove one, if many, three or four. To take all would be a
[626] despicable theft, sufficient to brand the transgressor as greedy;
[224] hence public opinion prevents the system from being carried to excess. A hunter who brings back several mountain goats or other large game is expected to invite his neighbours to a feast, which virtually means that he must share his takings.

556 Presents of this kind increase the prestige of the donor who
431 has thus acted in accordance with Bella Coola ethics, and are advantageous investments since others must reciprocate. The system is carried to such lengths that, until recent years, it was more profitable to give away goods than to sell them. In the case of a sale, the purchaser endeavours to give as little as possible, whereas the recipient of a gift returns as much as

[14] This is a modern practice, dating from the introduction of home-brew.

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he can. Several of the older people mentioned that early white traders would have received more for their goods by giving them away than by selling. 556 431

Even at the present time the Bella Coola sometimes carry out a practice which was once common. Particularly in the early autumn or in spring, a chief who has large supplies of food may decide to show his wealth to the members of a neighbouring tribe such as the Bella Bella. Alone, or with a few friends, he goes to a foreign village where he is sure to find accommodation in the home of some friend, relative, or important chief. In the evening he invites the inhabitants of his host's village to the house in which he is staying, and uses the food he has brought with him to provide them with an elaborate meal. His guests now feel it incumbent on them to repay this generosity, and one of them asks the singers to beat out one of his songs, the Bella Bella equivalent to *sisaok*, *a'alk*, or even *kusiut*. The owner dances to it and then gives presents to the stranger to validate the performance he has just witnessed. This is repeated by everyone to whom he has given food, and although each present may be small, their total is greater than the original outlay. Sometimes a poor man, feeling himself too insignificant to give a ceremony of this kind, takes a supply of food to a foreign tribe to sell. If the hosts wish to show their generous dispositions they persuade him to give it away in the fashion just described, which always brings in more than he could obtain by sale. It is even customary for the hosts to lend such a stranger enough food for public distribution if his own stock is too small. 556 648 [484]

Although the most important Bella Coola dances are performed at potlatches or during the *kusiut* season, they are not confined to these periods. Professional singers do nothing else and, except during the run of salmon when everyone is busy fishing, a dance occurs every few nights. Supernatural beings are not called down; consequently there is little solemnity and everyone has a good time. On these occasions, *kusiut* songs are first beaten out, followed by *sisaok* and *a'alk*, and the owner 533 535 574

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533 of each song dances to it. Anyone who has enough food to
535 provide a meal for all is glad to invite his neighbours to such
574 an affair, but the singers and heralds can force a stingy man to act as host. Everyone knows his neighbour's resources and the singers have no hesitation in going to the house of a man with an ample supply of food and beginning to beat out songs there. The heralds are quick to see what is happening and call the people, with the result that the involuntary host is compelled to provide a meal in order not to be thought mean and churlish. Without waiting for the singers to take the initiative, heralds likewise often invite people to the house of a man whom they know to be well provided with food.

During the summer, the necessity of laying in supplies of salmon makes it impossible to hold many dances, although one of the non-sacred type just described takes place whenever there is a lull in the fishing. In the early autumn, when berries, fish, and game are abundant, the thoughts of chiefs turn to potlatches and the lengthy preliminaries are begun. At this season, too, a chief who lacks sufficient wealth to invite foreign guests, calls in his neighbours for a *susaok* dance and initiates some of his young relatives into that society. The ritual, described in the last chapter, resembles that of a potlatch except that no new house is constructed, there is no return of a dead relative, and the ceremonial connected with the coming of foreigners is necessarily omitted. In some cases a chief performs this type of rite a year before he proposes to hold a potlatch, and explains that he is doing so because he will be unable to give presents to the inhabitants of his own village at the later affair. Gifts so distributed are returnable with interest, though it is not obligatory for recipients to do this in time for the donor to make use of their repayment at his potlatch.

Ceremonials of this nature occupy the Bella Coola during the early autumn, while in winter *kusiut* dances take place almost nightly. When they are over, it is time for the non-sacred variety of *a'alk* performances, and for another type of

rite, nusäxkämx.

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* 539 * 787 sons, of whom the eldest was about sixteen, though old enough to appreciate the slights put upon their father, could do nothing to defend him.

[556] On a winter day one of these lads felt impelled to follow a trail down the north side of the Bella Coola valley along the edge of salt water. The weather had been cold for some time, but on this day it was so warm that he lay down to doze on the warm rocks. Near his head was a small opening which connected with a long passage to the ocean, and through this he presently heard the hoarse breathing of sleeping seals. His hunting desires aroused, he went to the edge of the steep crag overlooking the sea and dived in. He bravely penetrated into a narrow passage which led him under the rocks, until with his last gasp he emerged into a cave where there were countless seals. Waiting only a moment, and without disturbing the animals, he dived back through the passage safely.

[411] When he reached home the lad said nothing about what he had seen, but that evening he began to make a seal-spear of the usual type with a wooden handle and a bone point. He asked his father to help him with this carpentry task, and his mother to make a rope for the harpoon-head. Though surprised at their son's energy, the parents did as he requested, but the fellow-villagers mocked at his efforts, for the lad was no hunter.

Next morning he asked his father to accompany him, and the two set off in a canoe, carrying the spear which had been made the previous evening. Before starting, the lad requested one of his brothers to have a fire ready for cooking the spoil that night. Father and son paddled to the entrance of the subterranean passage, though the old man was, of course, ignorant of its existence. The son told him to wait, and dived overboard, armed only with a club, for the seal-spear had really been unnecessary. He penetrated through the passage and at once killed a seal pup, born that year, with which he returned to the canoe. The lad explained nothing to his father, so that it seemed to the latter as if his son had dived down into the depths and there slain a seal, after remaining below for an amazingly long time.

When the two returned to the village they were greeted with a shriek of laughter at the small size of their quarry. In derision, the villagers took the pup from them and threw it from hand to hand, as if it had been a ball.

[224] [225] [574] [556] As already described, it is customary whenever a man kills a deer, a mountain goat, several seals, or any other large game, for him to invite his fellows to a feast. The number of guests depends on the size of the quarry, but in all cases the chiefs are the first to be invited and anyone who fails to do so is laughed at for his stinginess. On this occasion the seal-pup was obviously so small that any general invitation to partake of it was ludicrous. Nevertheless, the lad sent a herald to invite not only

1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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224 hanging rock where no rain can penetrate. Long ago, some
[732] hunter failed to do this and became blind in consequence, hence the rite has since been carried out.

When a hunter is in the field, his wife must not swing. To do this causes him to go up into lofty and dangerous places as she rises on the swing, and also destroys the power laboriously accumulated by ceremonial chastity.

Ritual Acts

796 Ceremonialism is an extremely important aspect of Bella
226 Coola life, but most of their rites are social or religious rather
789 than magical, so that descriptions of them belong to other chapters. In connection with the taking of the first olachen and salmon, however, a number of ritual acts are performed to bring about desired ends; the element of propitiation is not entirely absent, but on the whole they may be considered as magical.

Rites connected with the first olachen

226 At the height of the olachen run, the fish are so abundant
796 that they can be taken profitably in large purse-nets. They
574 do not, however, come simultaneously, and eager fishermen keep watching for their arrival and catching the straggling forerunners in hand dip-nets. These fish must not be eaten immediately. Each fisherman arranges a box in the front part of his house in which he deposits them as taken; if several men are doing this in a single dwelling, one box for each will be arranged near the front-door. Whenever a dance is held, eagle down is blown over the receptacle to placate the olachen and prevent them from being disturbed by the noise. As soon as a man has caught enough for a feast, he invites all his fellows to his house and the fish are distributed. It is taboo for any woman to share this meal, and it is most improper for a man to summon his neighbours until he has enough olachen to allow each guest to carry home a plentiful supply for his family. In former times, there used to be a number of meals of this kind,